Profiles: An Exploratory Study of Business School Participants in France

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CAREER ANCHOR PROFILES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF BUSINESS SCHOOL PARTICIPANTS IN FRANCE

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"Research over the last 25 years has shown that 80 percent of workers feel they are not using their strengths on a daily basis. When you consider it closely, though, it's almost surprising that 20 percent of the working population does get to use their strengths daily. The key missing ingredient in so many companies is management's lack of passion for getting the right people in the right jobs."

Source: "The 7 Hidden Reasons Why Employees Leave"
Leigh Branham (2005) AMACOM publishing, New York, NY

ABSTRACT

The current business environment has become clearly more international, marked by boundaryless careers, mergers and acquisitions, restructurings, and layoffs. With the ever-growing disappearance of the long-term employment contract, employees are considered as being responsible to manage their own development. The concept of career anchor was first introduced by Schein (1978) to describe the association of self-perceived attitudes, values, needs and talents that individuals develop over time.

The present study uses the Career Orientation Inventory (COI) developed by DeLong (1982a, 1982b) to measure career anchors within a population of students and alumni from a French business school in the south of France. It explores how career anchors are related to age, gender, work experience, and education and addresses the associations between various career anchors. Career anchor profiles yield characteristics which can be linked to various career stages. In addition, the findings support career anchor associations previously proposed by Feldman and Bolino (1996). The study contributes to the ongoing research on career anchors and their measurement within a French context.

I. RESEARCH QUESTION

Today's workforce is characterized by more women, minorities, and multi-nationalities. Entrants are also more technically savvy than their former counterparts and appear to seek meaning in their work and advancement. If not satisfied, they are inclined to change jobs and/or companies more readily than previous generations (Hall, 1996; Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Many organisations have to determine the best manner in which to train and develop younger, more mobile workers (Kniveton, 2004), but also manage an aging workforce.

According to Schein (1985), the knowledge of one's career anchor is critically important because of its influence in career choices and its effect on shaping individual goals in life. He demonstrated additional evidence that the emergence of a career anchor may also influence the selection of specific occupations and work settings. The ability to place the career anchor in alignment with an individual's work ultimately becomes a definition of his/her career success. With this foundation, numerous authors have sought to test and measure the various career anchors within different populations.

The present study is inspired by recent work of Roger (2006) and Wils et al. (2008) and addresses the influence of age, gender, work experience, and education level on career anchors measured within a population of students and alumni from a French business school. The study explores the distribution of career anchors, career anchor associations and the influence of the aforementioned variables, as well as their link with career stages.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Many studies were published on career anchors related to different job types, industries, countries and work environments. Keenan and Newton (1986) for example studied final year engineering students in over 20 different departments at six British universities, investigating the effects of engineering education and career orientation. Marshall and Bonner (2003) measured career anchors within a heterogeneous sample of 423 graduate students in five different countries. Crook and Crepeau (1997) researched and measured career anchors of IS professionals and students, while Petroni (1997) focused on career paths of design engineers. Jarlstrom (2000) studied the career anchors and personality aspects of Finnish business students. Tan and Quek (2001) studied career anchors of educators in Singapore.

Other studies on the influence of gender in different professions, such as accounting, engineering, and education, focused on how career anchors might be differentiated (Bailyn, 1987; Cox et. al., 1991; Schneer and Reitman, 1994; Lynn et. al., 1996), while still others attempted to establish relationships between age and career anchor choice (Allen and Katz, 1992; Biddle and

Roberts, 1994). After identifying 5 dimensions in his first study in 1978, Schein (1985) defined eight career anchors described in Table 1, and DeLong (1982) confirmed the presence of these eight anchors.

Career Anchor	*What you would never give up*
Technical-functional expertise	The ability to apply and continually develop your skill in that particular discipline
General management competence	The opportunity to manage the contribution of others from across an organisation to achieve results
Autonomy/independence	The enduring freedom to control your own activities
Security/stability	The opportunity for financial or job security
Entrepreneurial creativity	The challenge to create an enterprise of your own, built on personal endeavors
Service/dedication to a cause	The ability to achieve something of benefit or value to others
Pure challenge	The opportunity to achieve the almost impossible
Life style	The harmonious balance of personal, family, and work positions

Table 1. Description of Schein's (1985) eight career anchors.

Schein initially considered that each person had a dominant career anchor, but later results showed that combinations of anchors could be found in a person's profile. Feldman and Bolino (1996) suggested that multiple anchors could be organized in a model, as some anchors would be close to each other while other would be contradictory (see Figure 1).

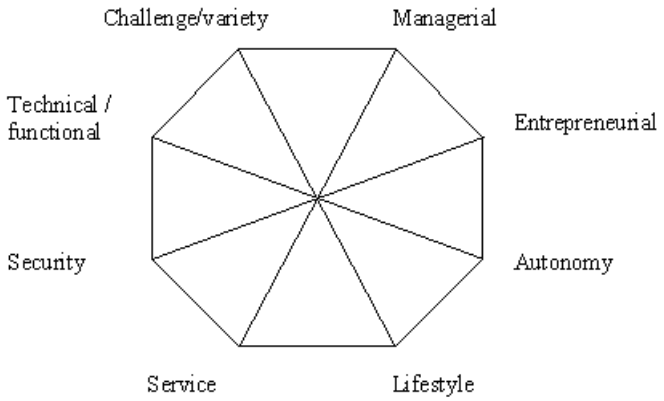

Figure 1. Proximity and opposition of career anchors proposed by Feldman and Bolino (1996).

In a second-order factor analysis of 6 career anchors, Roger (2006) finds 3 dimensions explaining 64 % of the variance. The first one includes Service, lifestyle and job security, the second groups management and autonomy, and the third is made of the technical anchor. Wils et al. (2008) suggest that career anchors could be grouped along 4 dimensions based on Schwartz's (1992) value structure model: Continuity (security, lifestyle and stability), Change (challenge, entrepreneurial, autonomy), Self-enhancement (management, identity) and Self-transcendence (technical/functional, service). Their results tend to confirm this typology.

III. METHODOLOGY

III-1. The Measuring Instrument

The Career Orientation Inventory (COI) developed by DeLong (1982a, 1982b) was used to measure career anchors within a population of students and alumni from a French business school in the south of France. The survey consists of 41 questions, and was chosen because of its well-established use and its internal validity confirmed by several other studies (Burke, 1983; Crepeau, et. al., 1992; Wood, et. al., 1985).

To respond to the needs of participants, the original survey in English was translated into French by bilingual research personnel. Two pre-tests of the translated version were performed to check for proper language usage and vocabulary. English and French versions of the survey were placed online.

III-2. The Population

Out of 635 individuals contacted to participate, a total of 127 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 20%. Respondents were experienced managers from three continuing education programmes, as well as alumni of these programmes. The study population consisted of 50.4% male, 49.6% female, with an average age of 35.7 years. Various job-types and industries were represented, and the average work experience was 12.7 years. Education levels ranged from high school diplomas up to doctorate degrees. The survey population included predominately French participants (109 respondents, accounting for 86%), with a few additional nationalities represented (less than four participants representing each of the following nationalities: Canadian, Danish, Ethiopian, Indian, Malaysian, Mexican, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish, Trinidadian, Ukrainian, and Zimbabwean).

Descriptive statistics were performed on the dataset to understand the distribution of career anchors in the population. Some respondents had a clear dominant career anchor and others had composite career anchors. Following the methodology of Ramakrishna and Potosky (2003), the difference between the two highest average scores of career anchors for all respondents was

calculated. The differences ranged in value from 0.05 to 1.40. The lowest 10 percent of the difference between the highest average sub-scale score and the next highest average sub-scale score was 0.17. This value was used as a cut-off to determine if two career anchor sub-scores should be considered equal. A dominant career anchor was reported if the score was greater than 0.17. Out of 127 respondents, 80 had a single dominant anchor.

Survey data were subjected to principle component analysis with Varimax rotation to check the eight-factor structure. A second-order factor analysis was performed to determine the associations of career anchors with respect to each other. The corresponding correlation matrix was consulted to further delineate the compatible or opposing natures of the measured career anchors. Career anchor groupings (termed "Dimensions"), were regressed on age, gender, work experience, and education level to explore the influence of these variables on the different anchors of the respondents.

IV. RESULTS

A 10-factor model was validated, with Schein's Security anchor loading separately along two factors, Geographical and Financial/job security, and Schein's Challenge anchor also loading separately along two factors, Challenge and Variety (see Table 2). Eigen-values ranged from 1.48 to 2.26, representing 56.4% of the variance explained.

Factor	Axe	Number of items	Range of Loadings	Eigen value	Explained Variance (%)	Cumulative Explained Variance (%)
Managerial	1	5	0,460-0,860	11,960	8,7	8,7
Security (geographical)	2	3	0,909-0,936	8,151	12,7	21,3
Technical/ Functional	3	5	0,598-0,840	7,429	8,0	29,4
Autonomy	4	5	0,577-0,809	5,345	6,9	36,2
Security (Job/Financial)	5	3	0,780-0,893	4,436	7,5	43,8
Service	6	4	0,456-0,851	3,296	5,9	49,7
Lifestyle	7	4	0,417-0,697	3,132	5,1	54,8
Challenge	8	3	0,736-0,756	2,480	5,9	60,7
Entrepreneurial	9	3	0,642-0,908	2,267	7,7	68,4
Variety	10	2	0,761-0,795	1,937	5,2	73,6

Table 2. Results of the10-factor model.

Results of a second-order factor analysis identified three dimensions which grouped the 10 career anchors. Dimension 1 includes the managerial, challenge and variety anchors; dimension 2 includes the autonomy, service, lifestyle and entrepreneurial anchors; and dimension 3 represents the two

security anchors (geographical and job/financial) and the technical/functional anchor.

The analysis of the dominant or combined anchors shows that 97 respondents (76.4 %) can be classified in one or another of the 3 dimensions (30 have combined anchors crossing different dimensions). Twenty (14 men and 6 women) belong to dimension 1 (managerial/ Challenge/ variety), 58 (26 men and 32 women) belong to dimension 2 (autonomy/ service/ lifestyle/ entrepreneurial, and 19 (8 men and 11 women) belong to dimension 3 (geographical and job/ financial security technical/ functional). It can be noted that men represent a large majority in dimension 1 (70 %), but a minority in dimension 2 (45 %) and 3 (42 %).

Table 2 shows the correlations between each of the career anchors. The three dimensions resulting from the factor analysis are represented in Figure 2. Anchors within a given dimension are all positively and significantly correlated with each other (at $p<0.05$), except for the lifestyle and entrepreneurial anchors (an entrepreneur may have some difficulties to reconcile private and professional life). The lifestyle anchor is also positively related to job and geographic security in dimension 3, and the entrepreneurial anchor is positively related to challenge in dimension 1 and job security in dimension 3. Significant oppositions are observed, indicating that some anchors can be contradictory to each other: the managerial and the variety anchors are opposed to the lifestyle and geographic security anchors. The entrepreneurial anchor is opposed to the job and financial security anchor.

	G	T	A	J	S	L	C	E	V
Managerial	**-0.258**	0.010	-0.085	0.102	0.144	-0.213	**0.337**	0.072	**0.559**
Geo-security		0.185	0.183	**0.245**	-0.089	**0.327**	-0.045	-0.068	-0.212
Techfunc			-0.038	**0.326**	0.092	0.083	-0.022	-0.017	-0.077
Autonomy				0.051	0.219	**0.508**	0.107	**0.273**	-0.116
Job-security					0.149	**0.240**	-0.048	-0.206	0.062
Service						**0.239**	0.178	0.220	0.053
Lifestyle							-0.094	0.099	**-0.250**
Challenge								**0.252**	**0.326**
Entrepreneurial									0.170
Variety									1

p<0.05, **p<0.01,** **p<0.001**

Table 2. Correlations (bivariate) between the 10 career anchors

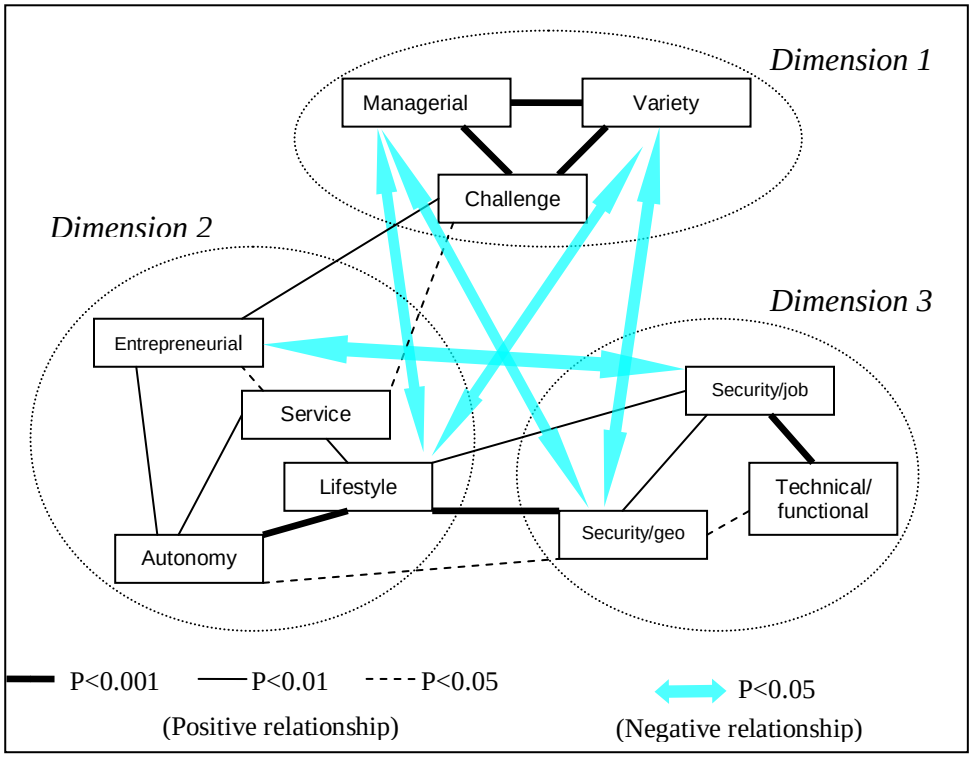

Figure 2. Career Anchor dimensions and significant relationships between anchors.

Bivariate correlations between each of the dimensions' factor score and four independent variables (age, gender, work experience, and level of education) were computed. Gender and education level were coded as categorical variables with 0=male and 1=female, and 0= <Bac+3, 1= >Bac+3, respectively. Initial analysis revealed high collinearity between age and work experience (R = 0.97 between the two variables, VIF=18.8 and 19.0, respectively). This is intuitively expected as with increased age, it is anticipated that work experience would also increase. Therefore, work experience was not retained for subsequent analysis.

The correlation analysis in Table 3 shows a significant relationship ($p<0.05$) between dimension 1, age ($r= -0.162$) and education ($r=0.152$), showing that respondents more anchored on management, challenge or variety are younger and more educated. Correlation results for dimension 2 suggest (but only at $p<0.10$) that the older a person is, the more likely he/she is to be found in this dimension centred on lifestyle, autonomy, service or entrepreneurship. We also note that dimension 2 and dimension 3 (centred on security and technical/functional expertise) are more favoured by female

respondents. These results are partly confirmed by the regression analysis shown in Table 4.

	Dimension 1 : Managerial, Challenge, Variety	**Dimension 2 : Lifestyle, Autonomy, Service, Entrepreneurial**	**Dimension 3 : Security (geographic), Security (job), Technical/Functional**
Pearson Correlation			
Age	**-0,162***	0,126^{+}	-0,058
Gender	-0,066	0,116^{+}	**0,319***
Education	**0,152***	0,097	0,047

* Correlation is significant at **p<0.05** $^{+}$ Correlation is significant at p<0.10

Table 3. Correlations between age, gender and education, and career anchor dimensions.

Coefficients					
Dimension	**Predictor**	**B**	**Beta**	**t**	**Sig.**
1: Managerial, Challenge, Variety	**Age**	-0,017	-0,177	-1,951	0,053^{+}
	Gender	-0,206	-0,103	-1,145	0,255
	Education	0,528	0,136	1,547	0,124
2: Lifestyle, Autonomy, Service, Entrepreneurial	**Age**	0,017	0,174	1,920	0,057^{+}
	Gender	0,323	0,162	1,789	0,076^{+}
	Education	0,447	0,115	1,306	0,194
3: Security (geographic), Security (job), Technical/Functional	**Age**	0,002	0,024	0,273	0,785
	Gender	0,652	0,327	3,725	**0,000***
	Education	0,230	0,059	0,693	0,490

* **p<0.05** ; $^{+}$p<0.10

Table 4. Regression between age, gender and education and career anchor dimensions.

For dimension 1 (Managerial, Challenge, and Variety), the regression model yields R^2=0.056 (p<0.10). Age show a β= -0.177 (p<0.10), but Gender was not significant. Regression analysis of the Dimension 2 (Lifestyle, Service, Autonomy, Entrepreneurial) factor score on age, gender, and education reveals both age and gender as being slight predictors (p<0.10). Dimension 3 (Security-geographic, Security-job and Technical/Functional career anchors) is significantly related to gender (p<0.05), confirming the strong representation of female respondents.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The three dimensions resulting from our analysis tend to confirm Feldman and Bolino's (1996) anchor structure: they include anchors close to each other in their model. Oppositions also correspond to anchors at opposing corners of their octagon. Our model slightly differs from Roger (2006) who finds a closer link between management and autonomy and no link between technical and security anchors. Our three dimensions also slightly differ from the four dimensions defined by Wils et al. (2008) grouping for example the challenge with the entrepreneurial anchor, or the lifestyle with the security anchor. But although these anchors belong to different dimensions in our model, they are significantly related in our study.

Research of Super (1957) rests to a large extent on the actualisation of the « self image » through the analysis of synthesis or compromise between individual factors and social elements; the individual finds the occasions to experience reality. He uses the analogy of game pieces (employees) moving about a chessboard (organisation), suggesting that they are not only influenced by organisational events, but by the general environment in which they are found. For Super (1957), the personal satisfaction gained from one's work is related to the degree to which he/she can develop his/her self-image, utilise his/her competencies, and express his/her interests and values. These ideas are directly related to the development and choice of a career anchor.

Our results suggest that our three career anchor dimensions can be related to the different career stages he proposed. For Super, career evolution includes a series of stages corresponding to precise attitudes and behaviours: growth, exploration, stability, maintenance and decline. Other authors (e.g., Miller and Form, 1951; Erikson, 1963) equally developed the idea of career stages with somewhat different names and durations. Ginzberg et. al. (1951) characterised the evolution of professional life by the successive professional choices made by individuals, noting that continuity and observed tendencies are at the root of understanding professional directions. However, the idea of a relationship between age and career stage has come under question in recent literature.

Dimension 1, represented by the Managerial, Challenge, and Variety career anchors, includes mainly young educated managers and mirrors an initial career stage characterized by professional growth, a desire for professional exploration sought by many young entry-level managers.

Dimension 2, which includes the Lifestyle, Autonomy, Service and Entrepreneurial career anchors, corresponds to a later stage when people become more autonomous, self-confident, but often started a family life and want to maintain a good balance between professional and private activities (Mounard, 2008). This search for balance is particularly important for female managers. Kniveton (2004) argues that despite the growing rhetoric and desire for companies to promote and advance women into managerial positions,

there may exist a perception among female respondents that choosing a managerial career path would result in sacrificing a balance within their personal life and desired autonomy. Roberts and Newton (1987) found similar results through in-depth interviews, noting that female respondents consistently made more reference to family responsibilities when considering career choices. Super (1957) also noted that the situation is more complex for women due to this interference of their family role on their career.

At the organisational level, research of Eagly and Blair (1990) suggests that gender roles were often in conflict with organisational roles, whereby women leaders or managers were confronted with stereotypes and expectations associated with the definition of a good manager, a definition which included more masculine qualities than feminine qualities. Gutek and Morasch (1982) coined the term "gender role spillover", as a representation of gender-based expectations which emerge as expectations of behaviour and performance. Powell (1988) highlighted that negative attitudes about women holding managerial positions in many companies often created a less than supportive organisational environment and lesser potential for advancement. This difference between men and women can still be observed today, in spite of all the efforts made to manage diversity and reach equal opportunity between genders.

The focus on autonomy, lifestyle and entrepreneurship seems to be a growing trend in today's society. Careers cross organizational and functional boundaries (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Employees, disappointed by traditional progression ladders of bureaucratic organisations, will search more autonomy and are ready to change organisations more often. This flexibility in adaptation has also been termed the "protean" career (Hall, 1976) pointing out the responsibility of the person in the management of his/her own career, but also stressing the importance of organizational support (autonomy, support, nature of work objectives) to favour psychological success, leading therefore to self-esteem, satisfaction, involvement and motivation.

Some results in the present study may reflect cultural differences between the United States (Schein's original study population) and France (current study). Work of Hofstede (1980) on the cultural implications of Power Distance differences worldwide suggests that despite the discussion of well-known American management models (e.g., Theory X and Y, Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid, Management by Objectives), French and US managers approach organisational structures and development differently. He notes that these models share a commonality in advocating participation of subordinates in management decision-making and career advancement. For the United States, a low Power Distance lends itself to a subordinate freely discussing and negotiating advancement, work objectives and individual development with his/her superior. However, French organisations are representative of large Power Distances which tend to create more depersonalised authority structures. This also creates lesser degrees of

participative management and career development initiatives sought by employees as compared to their US counterparts. This may also explain some differences previously mentioned concerning the opposition of and compatibility of certain career anchors (e.g., entrepreneurial and job security anchors being in opposition more within our French population).

Super's 1957 final career stages associated with achieved stability and maintenance, followed by decline, are especially found in Dimension 3 career anchors, centred on Security and the use of technical/ functional competencies. We also note the opposition of the Job security anchor to the Entrepreneurial anchor, suggesting a lack of interest in pursuing riskier business ventures later in their careers.

Some career anchor profiles reflect the desire for advancement, while still others seek various aspects of security. Each person's background and experience leads to specific anchors, and although these anchors are largely based on individual values, they can change over longer periods of time and be related to his/her career stages.

Schein (1990) addresses the issue of organisational support for a structured career development and job planning process and suggests that this process be derived from a strong strategic focus by management. For the socially responsible corporation, the ongoing task will be to determine current and future organisational needs, identify career anchors within their ranks, and effectively link career development actions to assist employees to sustainable performance in their careers.

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